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Funding social change since 1967

RESIST

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A Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority

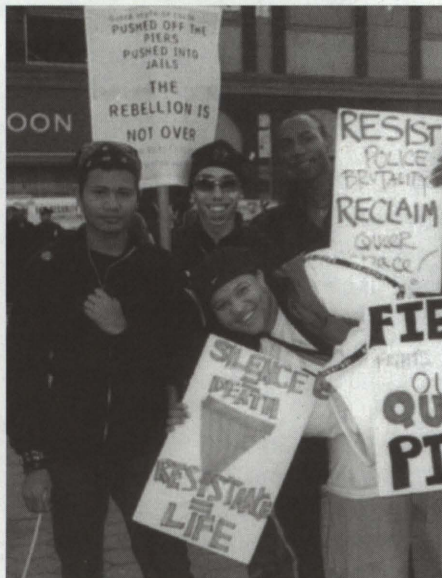
June 2004

The Rebellion is Not Over *Transgender Activism 35 years After Stonewall*

JESSE EHRENSAFT-HAWLEY

Thirty-five years ago this June, queer¹ street youth took to the streets of Greenwich Village for three full nights and days to fight back against the onslaught of police violence and repression. They made themselves and their needs visible in a world that would have preferred for them to disappear. This spontaneous act of collective resistance, which erupted in response to a routine police raid of the Stonewall bar on Christopher Street, has become the historical marker of the emergence of the modern US gay rights movement.

As “gay rights” issues (such as repealing sodomy laws and establishing gay marriage) take center stage in the national political arena, many people might think that our communities—the descendants of those street fighters who spearheaded the Stonewall rebellion—have stepped into the spotlight of the mainstream world. Few remember Sylvia Rivera, a transgender² Latina activist who, along with other “street queens,” was one of the first people to



Queer youth of color fight to save the Christopher Street Pier and the West Village from re-development and gentrification. Photo courtesy of FIERCE!

throw her high heels, pennies, and bottles at the police to keep them from occupying their queer space. At the time, police could arrest any person who was not wearing at least three articles of clothing deemed

appropriate to their assigned sex.

Soon after Stonewall, Sylvia and a group of young transgender women formed STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) to organize within the context of the Gay Liberation Front around housing, police violence, job discrimination and human rights issues of transgender and queer street youth. Until her death in February 2002, Sylvia and her comrades fought to keep the transgender people from “sitting at the back of the bus of the gay movement” (to use Sylvia’s words).

Building on a Fierce Legacy

On this 35th anniversary of Stonewall, FIERCE! invokes the spirit of Sylvia Rivera and STAR as we continue our struggle for the liberation of our communities. FIERCE! (Fabulous Independent Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment) is a New York City-based community organizing project for Transgender, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two Spirit, Queer and Questioning (TLGBTSQQ) youth of color. We are dedicated to developing leadership and building power in our communities to take on the institutions that perpetuate transphobia, homophobia, racism, economic injustice, ageism and the spread of HIV and other preventable illnesses—and make daily survival a terrifying challenge for many TLGBTSQQ youth. The legacy of Sylvia (who we had the privilege to work closely with in the last years of her life) has paved the way for us to build a multi-issue organization led by TLGBTSQQ youth of color.

Current conditions are disturbingly parallel to the pre-Stonewall days for trans and

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¹ - *Queer*, a politicized term reclaimed by gender and sexuality activists, is an umbrella term for those who defy the parameters of gender and sexuality that society imposes upon us.

² - *Transgender* is an umbrella term that includes transsexuals, gender-queers and those communities and individuals whose gender identities defy the societally-imposed categories of “man” and “woman.” Transgender community activists coined the term as a way to differentiate between sex (the medical assignment of male, female or intersex status at birth) and gender (which is based self-expression).

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queer youth of color and homeless youth in New York City's Greenwich Village (still one of our nationally acclaimed "gay" public spaces).

Many TLGBTSQQ youth are accustomed to arbitrary and abusive treatment, whether by their families, at their places of residence, on the streets, at school, or in social service centers. According to the Empire State Coalition (a policy and research organization that focuses on homeless youth issues), at least 35% of New York City's 22,000 homeless youth are LGBT. Additionally, there is an uncounted number of housed and marginally-housed TLGBTSQQ youth. A significant, but uncounted, number of transgender and queer youth are in and out of the foster care system and juvenile detention systems. They often leave school because of the violent homophobia and transphobia they face in classrooms, corridors, and school yards.

Many TLGTSTQQ youth—particularly transgender youth of color who often cannot find even low-wage employment—resort to sex work and criminalized activity in order to survive and pay for hormones. This involvement increases health risks such as sexually transmitted diseases and police violence and leads to the overrepresentation of trans youth in juvenile justice facilities, where they face severe discrimination and abuse. For many trans and queer youth, everyday life has become a dangerous cycle of being tossed back and forth from shelters, to the streets, into prisons, and back onto the street.

The Erosion of Public Space

In 1994, former Mayor Giuliani initiated a "pilot project" in the 6th Precinct (which has jurisdiction over Greenwich Village) as part of his so-called "quality of life" policies. These policies gave police the authority to treat petty offenses such as panhandling, public urination, blocking a sidewalk, loitering with the intent to prostitute, graffiti, and homelessness itself as worthy of prosecution. These policies are being further developed under current Mayor Bloomberg, drawing massive resources from social services and education. In fact, under Mayors Guiliani and Bloomberg, the only "public service" to receive increased funding has been criminal justice.

The youth who make use of the pier and Greenwich Village as a public space have



Transgender activists fight for legal access to public space in New York City. Photo courtesy of FIERCE!

reported sharp increases in police harassment, false arrest and racial and gender profiling. Indeed, every 6th precinct arrest under the "loitering with the intent to prostitute" clause have been transgender women—mostly young and almost exclusively of color.

Many respondents to a survey developed by FIERCE! report that they were arrested while doing street outreach for HIV/AIDS peer education organizations. Police have cited the many condoms they had in their possession as "proof" of their guilt. Survey respondents also said they fear walking down the street in the West Village, less because of civilian anti-trans violence than because of the fear of being arrested simply for being transgender, of color, and using public space.

Whose Quality of Life?

In the summer of 2000, FIERCE! members began organizing a response to increased policing and mass arrests of youth of color on the Christopher Street Pier. When NYS and NYC closed the Pier for redevelopment in 2001, many West Village merchants, residents and political leaders said that they hoped the redevelopment of the Pier and the beefed-up police presence in the area would improve their quality of life. FIERCE!'s position, however, is that this concept of "quality of life" not only ignores, but adversely affects the quality of life of TLGBTSQQ youth, especially those who are of color.

Through a mix of youth-led organizing strategies—including direct action, media advocacy, street visibility through art, activism, and testifying at public forums—FIERCE! has been able to change the terms of the public debate about quality of life

and public safety in the West Village. And in coalition with all different kinds of community groups, we have put forward a vision of our own concept of "quality of life" which prioritizes access to healthcare, employment, education, housing, and open public space—not police and prisons.

As we approach this 35th anniversary of Stonewall, we are extremely heartened by the fortitude of those activists who went before us, particularly those who were marginalized not only by mainstream society, but also by our own movements. With the strength of this radical trans and queer history, we look towards a FIERCE future where our voices, desires, bodies, gender expressions and communities are celebrated, heard and achieve full self-determination. Knowing that we are still far from this vision, we remember that the rebellion is still not over.

Jesse Ehrensaft-Hawley is a co-founder and director of FIERCE!, which received a grant from RESIST in 2002. For more information, contact FIERCE!, 437 West 16th St LL, New York, NY 10011; www.fiercenyc.org.



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Economic Justice An Issue for All

Queers for Economic Justice Shows Impact of Welfare Reform

JOSEPH DEFILIPPIS

Why is welfare is a gay issue? As coordinator of the Queer Economic Justice Network, representing dozens of New York's queer and anti-poverty organizations, I am often asked that question—by both gay activists and welfare-rights advocates. It is surprisingly difficult, even for people who have dedicated themselves to fighting for poor New Yorkers, to acknowledge poverty in the queer community.

The myth of gay affluence gained prominence in the 1980s, in no small part due to some highly publicized marketing surveys of the readership of gay magazines. The existence of gay people with lots of disposable income was an appealing pitch to make to advertisers, and it was quickly used by some gay political leaders eager to flex the community's developing muscles.

However, the magazine's subscribers were predominantly white men. The queer community also includes people of color, who, like their heterosexual counterparts, generally make less money than white men.

And in a country where women still make 80 cents for the same work that earns men a dollar, it should come as no surprise that lesbian-headed households often struggle economically.

Transgender people find it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain employment at all. In order to survive, many transgender people end up in off-the-books jobs such as bartending or sex work, where they are unable to contribute to social security funds, and thus end up with nothing to count on in their old age.

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender senior citizens are less likely than heterosexuals to have children, and the financial support that they often supply.

Finally, according to the Hetrick-Martin Institute, queer youth make up 40 percent of the homeless youth living on the streets of New York City.

By including these populations, we can see a more accurate and complex picture of the economic make-up of the gay community than we can from surveys of the white male readers of the *Advocate*.

Impact of Welfare Reform

The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community has been affected by the welfare reforms of 1996 just as other minority populations have been. Hunger and homelessness have increased among our poor. The Metropolitan Community Church, the largest gay church in the world, has reported that demand for food at their New York food pantry rose from 1,600 in 1996 to more than 3,300 within two years.

In NYC, the LGBT Community Center has reported that the number of clients at its addiction program who identify as homeless has tripled from 5% to 15% since 1996.

In addition, queer people have been affected by welfare reform in other ways that are specific to their identities. Rules requiring mothers who seek benefits to provide the names of fathers, which caseworkers use to then track down the fathers to collect child support, leave lesbian mothers open to abuse from their exes. According to the Lambda Treatment and Recovery Program, queer substance users who seek benefits are being mandated into recovery programs that are homophobic, and as a result, they drop out, which causes them to lose their benefits.

Workfare and Transgender Worker Discrimination

Transgender people have been so severely harassed at workfare sites that the Gender Identity Project has reported that the vast majority of their clients have given up their welfare benefits and returned to working the streets as sex workers, where they feel safer. In addition, because of rules regarding gender-appropriate dress, transgender people are often discriminated against when they show up for job training or required work programs. Because of their gender presentation, they are often sanctioned and lose their benefits.

The list goes on. In order to obtain government support, homeless youth must provide proof that they are not receiving support from their parents, and this proof must come in the form of a signed letter from the parents. Many have extreme difficulty providing such documentation, the

Urban Justice Center has found, not surprising given the fact that many queer youth are homeless because they were thrown out by their parents.

Given that so many in our community have had to depend upon welfare assistance, one might expect organizations that advocate for the queer community to make poverty and welfare reform issues a priority. With few exceptions, this has not been the case. Most of the larger GLBT organizations are not addressing poverty issues and policies in any substantive way.

Equally maddening has been the fact that most anti-poverty groups are not addressing the needs of the city's poor who are queer. Any organization that claims to represent poor people must put forth an agenda that represents the needs of all poor people. For example, a lawsuit that was successfully brought against the city in 2001 concerning the sexual harassment of women at workfare sites did not address the similar sexual harassment of transgender workfare workers.

The welfare reform law expired in 2002 and, although it remains in effect, it has yet to be renewed. It is vital for welfare-rights advocates, as they engage in the national debate surrounding the reauthorization of this law, to understand that this is also a "queer issue." As little political clout as the queer community may have, it still has more than welfare rights organizations do. By working with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organizations and getting them on board for this battle, the fight for welfare rights can be stronger. But in order to win these organizations as allies, anti-poverty organizations must acknowledge and serve those poor who are also queer. It is time that both recognize that welfare reform is a queer issue.

Joseph DeFilippis is the coordinator of Queers for Economic Justice. QEJ received a grant from RESIST last year. For more information, contact Queers for Economic Justice, 526 West 139th Street, #9, New York, NY 10031; www.queersforeconomicjustice.org.

Vermont Case Against Discrimination

An Interview with Transgender Activist and Police Officer Tony Barreto-Neto

CAROL SCHACHET

In a precedent-setting case, the Vermont Attorney General ruled in 2003 that Vermont law prohibits discrimination against transgender people in employment, public accommodations and housing. The case concerned a discrimination claim brought by former police officer Anthony (Tony) Barreto-Neto against the town of Hardwick.

According to a press release from Gay & Lesbian Advocates

and Defenders, which represented Tony, the Attorney General found probable cause that the Town of Hardwick illegally fired Barreto-Neto after it learned that he is transgender. The town settled the case in April 2004, agreeing to a payment award and the adoption of a formal policy of nondiscrimination against transgender persons, including employee training on the subject.

Recently, RESIST Newsletter editor Carol Schachet interviewed Tony about his life, his suit against the town of Hardwick, and his work as a transgender activist.

Where did you grow up, and how did you make your transition?

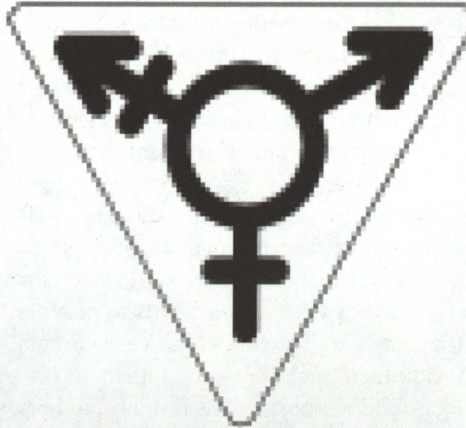
BARRETO-NETO: I grew up in Tampa. My father had instilled in me a lot of self-esteem. My father was a Native American, and there used to be certain male Native Americans who would stay back with women and help with the kids and would cook and do things, and were shamans and spiritual people. They were honored and revered in the tribe. When I tell people this, they think I'm making that up, because "how can anybody ever revere such an abomination" as somebody who messes around with the very essence of your being, which is your sex. They say: "God made you this, and God made you that, and you can't change that." I see that God doesn't make mistakes. People do. God made me exactly the way he wanted me.

I went to school in New Orleans [where I started over as a man.] Then I went back to Florida, where I was an activist. I traveled all over the place, speaking to groups, living a very public, activist life.

My wife had wanted to come up here [to Vermont] from Florida and just be very non-public, to have a life with our daughter, where she wouldn't have to worry about going shopping at the grocery store or anything like that. Not that she's not supportive, she is. But we just wanted a very quiet life.

All of my life, in one form or another I was discriminated against. I didn't know how awful it felt when it's directed solely at you instead of a group until I moved to Vermont.

Can you describe the discrimination you faced from the Hardwick police force? What happened to you that led you to file suit against them?



BARRETO-NETO: When they first hired me in Hardwick, they loved me like I was the best thing since maple syrup. The acting chief at the time was telling the other officers that they'd hired this great officer from Florida who was very experienced, a dynamite investigator, decorated for valor, and all these things—just blowing my horn. Literally overnight that changed. You go in one day and everything is wonderful. You go in the next and it's instant ice-cold wall.

The ostracism continued, and I just kept wondering: Why? Nobody told me that they knew anything about me, that they found any web pages [indicating that I was transgender]. They just started treating me like I was the lowest piece of humanity they'd ever met. I was never actually talked either to or with.

The department didn't order me a nametag or issue me a gun belt. They gave me a radio that was different from the other guys, and it never did work. I didn't have handcuffs. How do you perform as a police officer without these items that are obligatory? That can get you killed.

After a while you start wondering: "What's wrong with me? Am I a bad per-

son? Am I a bad police officer?" Many times as an officer I've told people: "Don't let them make you a victim, don't give in to pressure and become victimized." But I just toppled headlong into the abyss and became a victim. I did everything that I was taught not to do, which is blame myself for the way I was being treated. When you don't know why people are treating you like you're not even there, then you have to start questioning your own self.

Did winning the discrimination suit against the town of Hardwick help get past those feelings, to realize that it was found that they systematically did discriminate against you?

BARRETO-NETO: While I was still trying to work on the force, I was a mess. I lost 25 pounds. I couldn't sleep, and I couldn't eat. I think that's why the doctor took me off work because of the stress. When I finally found out why [things were so terrible at work] I didn't know how to feel, to tell you the truth.

Then when everything was coming to shit and I found out from [former Police Chief] Rambo the reason, you would think that I would have been just ecstatic, but the first thing that came into my mind was I've ruined my wife's life, I've shattered her dreams. That's a carryover from the discrimination.

You said that going through this process has made you a different person, and you'll never be the same activist you were before. What has changed for you?

BARRETO-NETO: I now understand how ugly discrimination is. We sometimes

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say “I can understand what you’re going through,” to someone who is African American or gay or transgender. But until you’ve been there, until you’ve experienced it yourself up close and personal, you have no idea what it feels like.

When we lived in Florida I fought for civil rights, I fought for rights of workers. I’ve fought for everything in my life but never with the drive and self-commitment that I feel now.

Before this case in Vermont, I was an activist, and I could get in front of two people or a thousand people and speak comfortably. I had the gift of gab and a silver tongue. Since the lawsuit, I’ve only spoken to one group, and the words come from the heart now. I don’t have to think about them, because I’ve felt them.

What do you think are the challenges that transgender people are facing now?

BARRETO-NETO: They are the same ones we’ve been facing. For one, the transgender community is the most targeted community in the country for hate crimes and murders, per capita. The murders are especially vicious—they’re brutal, they’re defacing, demeaning, often involving mutilation. These crimes are rarely charged as hate crimes, in part because there is a lot of the ignorance within police departments. [Transgender] people are still frightened to come out, and many are afraid of how they might be treated if they report harassment.

Overall, society remains ignorant about transgenderism. There are a lot of myths that need to be cleared up. We’ve been around for eons but “transgender” is a relatively new term. I meet people who don’t have a clue what the word means, whereas if you said “homosexual” or “gay or lesbian,” they immediately know what you mean. It’s very important that the people who are doing the activist work define and teach people who we are as a way to confront the ignorance and fear, which leads to hatred and violence. I’m just like you, I’m just like your neighbor, and as this ruling shows, I am covered by the Constitution.

Could you name a couple of myths about transgenderism?

BARRETO-NETO: One myth is that you wake up one day, having a mid-life crisis,

People talk about gay and lesbian rights in the mainstream more than they do about transgender rights. GLBT people obviously want the same rights as everyone else in housing, employment and the general rights that are guaranteed us by the Constitution.

and you go to a counselor and realize: “Oh my God, that’s the problem. I’ve been living the wrong gender all my life. I’ll have a sex change and everything will be fine.” People believe the myth that it’s an open door policy, and you can come in and go out, and that you literally change sexes.

Another myth is that if you are a female-to-male (FTM) you’re social climbing for the male perks. And the other way around, males-to-females (MTFs) are seen as an attack on masculinity.

Another myth is that transgender is something that has come about with technology. In fact, we have been around forever.

People often don’t even understand gender, what makes someone a man or a woman. If a man goes to war and loses his genitals, is he still a man? If a woman has a hysterectomy or has cancer and has to have a radical mastectomy, is she still a woman? Unfortunately our culture has made these people feel less than who they are.

Transgender issues seem to get to the core of human identity.

BARRETO-NETO: Gender is the basic essence of your being. Society has done that to our culture, and we’ve bought into it. I try to tell people what you have hanging between your legs or not hanging between your legs does not define you as a person. If you lost it tomorrow would it change you one iota? I’ll ask, “Would you sir, become a woman?” And, of course, the answer is, “Well no!” And I ask, “Well then, tell me, why is it that you wouldn’t become a woman, but if a person who was born phenotypically a female but also knows in his mind that he is not a female and has what I would call corrective surgery to fix that, why then is he not a man?” A lot of men can’t answer that, as a lot of women

can’t, because they don’t know how to define who they are.

And how would you define gender or transgender.

BARRETO-NETO: That sense of who you are and how you act and what kind of body you have has been here forever. I think men and women are different. That social construct has existed this since we stood upright and walked from the apes, or God created Adam and Eve.

Transgender is an umbrella term that covers anyone who is fluid with their gender. I think there’s a definite difference between what I call an RTS (which is a real transsexual) or a person who is transgender somewhere along the gender continuum who would not consider surgery. I think there’s a difference between us. But the transgender term encompasses us all.

The early movement for gay and lesbian liberation was led in part by transgender folk at Stonewall and elsewhere. How are the goals of transgender activists and gay and lesbian activists similar, and how do you think they might be different?

BARRETO-NETO: People talk about gay and lesbian rights in the mainstream more than they do about transgender rights. GLBT people obviously want the same rights as everyone else in housing, employment and the general rights that are guaranteed us by the Constitution. I think those are issues that overlap immensely and that we all work for. We all want acceptance as the persons that we are.

God knows there are not enough rights—I’m not trying to say that. I’m just saying that gay men and lesbians have a

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lot more visibility and acceptance than transgender people. People perceive that [transgender people are] attacking them at the very essence of their being, their sex or their gender or their appearance to the world. And people are afraid. They look at gender differently than they might consider sexual orientation.

Where we diverge a lot is in medical issues. In the gay community, if a woman needs to go to a gynecologist and have a PAP smear, there's not a problem with that. The same is true with a man who goes for his yearly "bend over and cough" exam. I'm not saying that there aren't doctors who aren't prejudiced against gays and lesbians. But in general, even if a woman looks like the biggest dyke in the world, she can get a PAP smear.

Take Robert E., who hadn't completed all his surgery, as an example. He died with ovarian cancer because many doctors turned him away. They really didn't know what to do with him. When transgender people walk into a doctor's office and face all those people and then have to drop their pants, there's a lot of internalized shame.

Within the medical community we are fighting for pharmacy rights. Not many states will pay for the surgery. It's a very expensive surgery. And after the surgery, how many will pay for the hormones? And they're expensive. Also many doctors have prejudices and will turn you away, and insurance companies may not cover you.

Is there anything that you would like progressive activists to know about transgender issues? And how might progressive activists and transgender activists work together more?

BARRETO-NETO: Many of us are working together now. NGLTF (the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force) and Planned Parenthood, among other organizations, include transgender in their mission statements. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the biggest group, doesn't work on transgender issues. They need to understand that we are all interrelated by the fact that we are all in some way not just messing with gender, but talking about issues of gender—whether it be same sex or same gender marriage or whatever. Whenever the gay community goes about getting rights for the gay community that are specific for

them, they leave a large segment of people behind, and that's often transgender people. There should be more dialogue between the two communities to continue working in a progressive way to bring us together.

We've proven in Vermont that sex discrimination includes me as a transgender person. In Vermont, the Attorney General said that gender, including transgender, discrimination is wrong. How can you say transsexual without the word sex. It's a no-brainer—transsexual discrimination is included in sex discrimination.

Both the gay community and the transgender community want to save people from being killed like Brandon Teena, or Tyrell Hunter or Chenille Pickett, and the list goes on.

Working Around Gender

Transgender Workers Experience Job Discrimination

NANCY NANGERONI

Imagine working your whole life towards a career in the field of your choice, and suddenly finding yourself unemployable, no matter how good your record or how hard you've worked. Or imagine that you've just graduated school, leaving the stupid social hazing rituals forever behind, only to find that no employer will hire you for any job, no matter how smart you are, how well you could do the job, or how hard you're willing to work.

This is the plight of many, if not most, visibly (or 'out') transgender persons.

A transgender person is someone whose gender expression and/or identity runs contrary to what most people would expect for a person born with their sexual anatomy. In other words, a transgender person is a person born male who exhibits a significant amount of femininity, or a person born female who exhibits a significant amount of masculinity. Some transgender persons live in the gender role opposite to the one they were assigned at birth, while many more occupy or visit that role as they see fit or as other factors in their lives allow. Still other transgenders mix masculinity and femininity in their lives as they find appropriate and/or desirable. A transgender person can have any sexual

What's next for you?

BARRETO-NETO: I still need to find a job. I've sent out zillions of resumes. I'll just keep looking, keep hoping.

When you truly believe in what you do, you have to stand up for your rights. You can't look yourself in the mirror unless you stand up for what you believe in, and help others to recognize just how valuable they are as human beings. People have no right to treat anyone the way that they treat our community. Even though I don't know exactly how my job situation will work out, I think this is probably what I'm going to do in some way or the other.

Carol Schachet is the Newsletter editor and Development Director at RESIST.

orientation; gender is not a reliable indication of sexual preference.

Transgender is an umbrella term that includes a wide variety of personal identi-



Nancy Nangeroni (right) and Gordene MacKenzie co-host GenderTalk Radio.
Photo courtesy of GenderTalk

ties, including cross-dressers (less friendly term: transvestites), transsexuals, transgenderists, intersexuals, drag kings and queens, gender benders, gender queers, and more. Within nearly all of these categories, there are individuals who do not personally identify as transgender.

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Transgender Employment Discrimination

When it comes to employment, a variety of problems plague the transgendered.

Those who are closeted risk losing their professional status—and often their jobs—should their secret become public. In the highest-profile case to date, truck driver Peter Oiler sued Winn-Dixie, a large southern retailer, for firing him when they found out that he was fond of cross-dressing. Peter's wife Shirley was supportive of his cross-dressing, and they behaved respectably when doing so in public. The ACLU represented his case, and leading transgender activists and lawyers provided help. Despite all this, a judge supported the giant corporation's right to fire him simply because he enjoyed cross-dressing on his own time.

More recently, a Texas Republican man (Sam Walls) favored to win a run-off election for state legislature was embarrassed by photographs showing him cross-dressed. He claimed that such practice was in the past, but lost the election by a landslide. Every cross-dresser (and they comprise the largest identifiable segment of the trans population) lives with the fear of having something like this happen to them.

Transsexuals live with similar concerns, although they have fared somewhat better in the courts. In a recent court case, an FTM transsexual cop in a small Vermont town won a suit against the local police force for harassment intended to try to get him to resign his position [see interview on page 4]. However, most transpersons do not have the resources or inclination to go to court. It is not unusual to hear of a transsexual being denied the right to use the same rest room as their peers, or having to endure other indignities meant to appease the sensibilities of their more intolerant co-workers.

While transsexuals who are closeted endure risks similar to those of the closeted cross-dresser, those transsexuals who are 'out' virtually always suffer a cost. Hostility from co-workers is a common complaint, and most transsexuals who transition "on the job" find that they cannot reasonably stay on the same job for long after. Even if management is willing, it only takes a few co-workers to make the work environment intolerable.

Gender queer folks, whose appearance challenges our culture's simplistic-but-per-

vasive notions of what is a man or woman, experience great difficulty in finding employment. Such persons will generally find work only in the lowest-paying jobs, or in those that service the GLBT community.

Race, class, ethnicity and other social stratifiers act to amplify the effects of anti-trans discrimination in the workplace. Transpersons who are members of minority cultures generally suffer worse treatment and greater unemployment than their white Anglo counterparts.

Unfortunately, there are no good studies documenting the rate of anti-transgender workplace bias that can support the assertions above. This writing is guided by a combination of personal experience and the testimony of many individuals personally known to the author.

Legal Protections and Inclusion

Currently, there are no federal protections that cover either hate crimes or workplace discrimination against transgender persons. The Human Rights Campaign, which is the main lobbying force behind the proposed employment non-discrimination inclusion of gay and lesbian persons, has included transpersons in their mission statement but has yet to make good on their commitment to include transpersons in their legislative proposals. Fortunately, a few states—Minnesota, New Mexico, California, and Rhode Island, as well as 55 cities

and 10 counties, including Minneapolis (the first), Boston, San Francisco, El Paso, San Diego, Boulder, Atlanta, and Tucson, have enacted protections for gender diversity (see www.transgenderlaw.org/ndlaws), and the numbers are growing.

All of these factors have given rise to a diverse community of committed transgender activists who are working hard to change things for the better. Many are savvy about the need for broad collaborative activism across the range of social justice issues, and commit themselves to participation in collaborative efforts.

Transgenderism challenges our society's relationship with its gender. It reveals the way that those in positions of power exploit gender to control and hold others powerless. Transgenderism advocates for a view of gender that, instead of imprisoning us in one of two straitjackets, opens our explorations to a beautiful, brightly varied garden in which we can better understand and accommodate one another and lead more rewarding and complementary lives.

Nancy Nangeroni is the founder and co-host (with her partner and producer, Gordene O. MacKenzie) of GenderTalk radio, the leading radio program on issues of gender and transgenderism. For more information, visit: www.gendertalk.com.

Plan to RESIST

There are many ways to extend your support of RESIST, including:

1. Make a tax-deductible contribution today. Send a check, make a credit card gift, or sign up for the pledge program (see page eight).
2. Donate stocks or other securities. As a non-profit organization, RESIST does not have to pay taxes, and you can deduct the contribution. That way more money goes to stopping wars than starting them.
3. Include a bequest to RESIST in your will or life insurance policy. That way, you can receive income tax deductions on your insurance premiums while you support social change.
4. Designate RESIST as a beneficiary of an IRA or pension plan.

For more information, contact
RESIST • 259 Elm Street • Somerville, MA 02144
617-623-5110 • resistinc@igc.org



RESOURCES

Below is a partial list of organizations for those interested in learning more about transgender activism. Many include links to additional resources.

Center for Gender Sanity

PO Box 30313

Bellingham, WA 98228

www.gendersanity.com

Provides publications and consulting services for transsexuals who plan to transition on the job, and for their co-workers and employers.

Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)

30 Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108

www.glad.org

Provides litigation, advocacy, and educational work in all areas of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights and the rights of people living with HIV.

Gender.Org

www.gender.org

Provides an array of information services, educational materials, advocacy training and technical assistance on their webpage.

Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (Gender PAC)

1743 Connecticut Ave NW, 4th Floor

Washington, DC 20009; www.gpac.org

Works to end discrimination and violence caused by gender stereotypes by changing public attitudes, educating elected officials and expanding legal rights. Includes links on workplace fairness and violence prevention.

Gender Talk

www.gendertalk.com

Hosts a weekly radio program about transgenderism offering first-person news and information.

International Foundation for Gender Education

PO Box 540229

Waltham MA 02454; www.ifge.org

Offers resources promoting self-definition and free expression of individual gender identity and a community calendar.

National Center for Transgender Equality

1325 Massachusetts Ave., Suite 600

Washington, DC 20005

www.nctequality.org

Monitors federal activity and communicates this activity to members around the country, and provides technical assistance and training to transpeople and allies.

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Transgender Civil Rights Project

1325 Massachusetts Avenue NW,

Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005

www.thetaskforce.org

Works to increase the number of state, local and federal laws that prohibit discrimination based on gender expression and identity.

National Transgender Advocacy Coalition

PO Box 76027

Washington, DC 20013; <http://ntac.org>

Works proactively to reform societal attitudes and the law to achieve equal rights for the gender diverse individuals.

Sylvia Rivera Law Project

322 8th Avenue, 3rd Floor

New York, NY 10001

www.srlp.org

Works to change policies that create obstacles to full inclusion and equal access for transgender, transsexual, intersex and gender variant people. Works in the realms of adult and juvenile justice, housing and homeless services, health care provision and insurance, police practices, employment and education.

Transgender Law Center

1800 Market Street, Suite 408

San Francisco, CA 94102

www.transgenderlawcenter.org

Offers direct legal services, public policy advocacy, and educational opportunities to advance the rights and safety of diverse transgender communities.

Transgender Law and Policy Center

www.transgenderlaw.org

Brings experts and advocates together to work on law and policy initiatives designed to advance transgender equality. Website includes many useful links.

Join the Resist Pledge Program!

We'd like you to consider becoming a Resist Pledge.

Pledges account for over 30% of our income.

By becoming a pledge, you help guarantee Resist a fixed and dependable source of income on which we can build our grant-making program. In return, we will send you a monthly pledge letter and reminder along with your newsletter. We will also keep you up-to-date on the groups we have funded and the other work being done at Resist.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number (for confirmation only) _____

Visa/Master Card # _____

Expiration Date _____

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☐ I'll send you my pledge of \$_____ every month/quarter/six months/year (please circle one).

☐ Enclosed is an initial pledge contribution of \$_____.

☐ Please automatically deduct my pledge from my credit card (below).

☐ I can't join the pledge program now, but here's a contribution of \$_____ to support your work.

Resist • 259 Elm Street • Somerville • MA • 02144. Donations are tax-deductible.